/140 cont./

868 The skill and perfection with which he opens out the palms for the covering of the maloca, with the help of the oar, or how he makes his plaitings, the way of tying and transporting a bundle of palms, merit admiration. His ability with regard to these practical necessities of life is very remarkable. And it becomes more admirable if we consider that the training is very quick, without true schools, and he soon finds himself skilled, for example, in the varied and beautiful work of nets and baskets. 797 They also learn with relative speed the trades of the civilized, 868 such as mason, blacksmith, carpenter, tailor, in the Salesian 177 Schools, although, perhaps due to the force of the environment, circumstances, and their inconstancy, they do not often reach perfection in their trade. Some continue as artisans of these trades in the missionary establishments. Others, returning from the schools to their homes, have an opportunity to use what they learned, handling, for instance, the saw, the hammer, and even the chisel. They are also the machinists of the launches that go up their immense rivers; just as they are capable of executing more delicate work, such as the observations and handling of meteorological instruments (5).

5. Wallace already observed a century ago (perhaps with some exaggeration to emphasize the idea) that, while a European countryman would take six months to learn how to handle a sextant, one of our Indians learns it in minutes. Koch Grünberg (Zwei Jahre) also made a similar observation.

152
● 502 They are the irreplaceable "practitioners" of the navigation of those dangerous rivers, because they have an amazing topographic memory of the hidden rocks and sandbanks, bound up with an impressive calm during the dangers presented by the storms and the cachoeiras.

/140 cont./

152
502 Perhaps, at first glance, the small range of the Indian's intelligence would impress us, even in the practical field and in the most obvious and simple things. We will verify, for instance, the mistakes they make in navigation, the fact of not knowing how to foresee and, later, how to avoid or to remedy an accident. Perhaps, to present concrete cases, in order to get the water out of a boat, they will not remove a plank that makes the operation difficult; if a riverside tree impedes navigation, they cut it so badly that the passage remains even more difficult, etc. This impression of intellectual obtuseness, nevertheless, will be lessened if we realize that he performs the work with disprejudice and disinterest.

/141/ 3) Fantasy or imagination.

154 A faculty highly developed in the native is the imagination. One easily understands why he is like that, since he lacks the control of a more highly developed and educated intelligence, having, on the contrary, a spirit animated by incoherent and even absurd childish legends and beliefs, and living in an environment of majestic and almost crushing
154 solitude. Many of their conversations in the long hours, idle during the day and dull at night, deal with legends, apparitions,
521 and spells. For this reason they always have their imaginations stimulated. Only in this way is it to be explained how they can see in some strange rocks similarities with plants, tools, etc., similarities that, even when warned, we could not perceive. It is enough to mention a rock of the cachoeira de Uaracapá, almost at the mouth of the river Papuri, presented as "a banana tree" and in which we only see one of those common rocks that rise out of the water.

Their incoherent conversations, their incomplete narrations, denounce someone who supplies his own fantasy and leaves room for the fantasy of the listeners. Sometimes when we want fast and practical information (for example, about a road, a cachoeira, a distance), we ask a native interpreter to ask another. They will talk 10 or 15 minutes between themselves, and at the end of that time our interpreter will say that

/251 cont./

487 The Amazon forest, interlaced as it is by lianas (a little less, it is true, than appears to anyone who only sees it from the bank of the rivers), is crossed with some difficulty, and [481] perhaps for this reason is not crisscrossed with trails. The custom of the Indians always to walk one behind the other, never side by side, is well known. It is what is called "Indian file," that is, one by one. The native does not go very far into the forest; he is afraid of Wãx-tĩ (VII -- 4, d (5)). As for his [241] clearing, it is even desirable that there is no path to reveal the site. In this way it will be better sheltered from thefts. For these reasons roads are not opened, except for those that lead from the maloca or povoado to the landing place, ordinarily a few dozen or, at most, one or two hundred meters in extent.

/252/ They discover, however, shorter routes than the interminable windings by way of the rivers or igarapés to go *[192] from one maloca to another. Such routes, as they are more frequented for the exchange of women, feasts, or trade, become better and constitute what is called varadouro (in Tukano ma'ã) (84).

84. It seems that originally the Tukano term ma'ã meant only the route that the canoe was to follow in the dangerous crossings of the cachoeiras. Today the term ma'ã is used as an equivalent to the Portuguese words: varadouro, caminho, estrada, etc.

482 All the transportation of cargo by land is done by means of the *[192] aturás /carrying baskets/, or pi'ĩ, which the woman carries on her back.

502 During the time of high water in the rivers canals navigable by canoes are formed within the forest, since the wilderness becomes a sea, and the native takes advantage of that in order to shorten the trips; his canoe takes a shortcut through the forest, instead of following all the sinuosity of the river. Their topographic memory of the rivers on which they live, going up and coming down, does not let them be led astray.

5: Goldman E-5 (1939-1940) 1963
SQ19 Tucano SQ19
CUBEO

121 societies. In reconstructing tropical forest culture history, note must be taken of the extraordinary case of cultural transfers over the entire area. For this reason alone knowledge of total cultural systems seems essential. As matters stand now, much reconstruction must be based upon the very unreliable foundation of trait comparisons. What has [177] been of special interest in my study of the Cubeo has been the way in which some widespread cultural traits, particularly masked dances, harvest rites, and sacred trumpets, have been taken up and fitted into distinctive cultural patterns with a focus in an ancestral cult.

133 The Northwest Amazon region is bounded on the south by the Amazon, from where it is joined by the Rio Negro eastward to where the Marañón issues from the Andes. The Guaviare River is its northern boundary, the Andean cordillera bounds it in the west, and the Rio Negro in the east. The principal rivers of the region are the Caquetá, Apaporis, Tiquié, Papurý, Isana, Vaupés (known in Brazil as the Caiarý), Cuduiarí, Querarí, Aiarí, Tie, and Guainía. All drain into the Amazon. Ecologically, the Northwest Amazon is sharply differentiated only from the neighboring Andean region to the west and to a lesser degree from the open prairie or llanos on its northern [137] side. Eastward it fades into the flatter and lower-lying forests of the Amazon. Its southern margin is fixed only by an arbitrary river boundary. It is a densely wooded region of tall trees closely packed and interlaced with vines and lianas. At the river edges the forest growth is lower and more brushlike. It is also an elevated region whose streams are punctuated by hazardous cataracts. On the Vaupés, between Yuruparí and the Rio Negro, Dr. Hamilton Rice (1910) counted 30 major cataracts and 60 small ones. The cataracts (*cachoeiras*) are for the Indians focal points of residence. Traditional sites, they often mark tribal and sib boundaries. Every cataract has its petroglyphs that depict mythical figures still known to the Indians. In some areas, as I have observed, the residents of the *cachoeiras* freshen the petroglyphs from time to time with deepening incisions. The rapids are more of a navigational hazard to the European traveler than to the Indians, who are expert canoemen and whose light craft [502] is easily portaged. Dr. Rice, who knew a good deal about the Amazon, [501] declared the Cubeo to be the most expert canoemen on the river. I can also testify to their coolness and skill in navigating their small dugout canoes, that have only an inch or two of freeboard, through the twisting boulder-strewn channel of a thundering rapids.

The land slopes abruptly eastward. In its western part the area is often a tumble of ravine-cut hills, exposed rock, and swamp. The Vaupés flows past high, open, uninhabited mesas. Scattered hills of

[text continues on p. 10]

5: Goldman E-5 (1939-1940) 1963
SQ19 Tucano SQ19
CUBEO

501 against the gunwale to set the rhythm. Frequent changes of stroke
516 are common. In pulling away, the first stroke is slow and strong. This is followed by a brief pause, the blade just out of the water, the stem resting against the gunwale. The helmsman, who steers with a broader-bladed paddle, uses powerful slow strokes that are one to two or three to those of the prowsman. When inertia has been over-
[461] come the stroke is accelerated, often to a furious tempo. The oarsman's back bends lower and his stroke is sharp, fast, and shallow. A fast beat is not kept up for long. The paddlers rest, permitting the
501 canoe to continue on its own momentum. Unless exhausted from a
461 long trip the mood of men in a canoe is gay. They burst into spontaneous shouts of *he ee ee*, sing, and joke loudly. Each passing bird is addressed, as "Where are you going?" With the paddle held as a gun they aim at the bird, pretend to shoot, and shout, "Now he is dead!"
501 On one occasion we chased a covey of herons downstream for about
517 two hours for amusement. The birds followed the river course, flying
[123] some 100 yards before settling on a branch. Striking paddles against the canoe and beating an empty gasoline tin, we drove the birds to the communities. The Indians shouted, "We sent you herons, why didn't you shoot them?"

501 The most important canoe positions are those of stroke and of
462 steersman. A woman traveling with men always steers, the lighter work. She may even nurse her child while steering. Among boys,
[857] each wants to be a steersman because it is easy. When the people are in no hurry canoe positions are informally assigned; children then occupy the stroke position, in a large canoe sitting side by side. They also steer. On a long journey the prowsman or stroke is always the strongest man, while a woman, or the oldest or weakest man, is at the helm. Intermediate positions are filled by considerations of balance, each canoe known for its own balance characteristics.

502 All the Indians know the river and its currents. Downstream the
[823] canoe is piloted along the currents that sweep out from creeks, calling for frequent crossovers; the center of the river is usually avoided because of the sun, the Indians preferring the shade of the shoreline. Going upstream the canoe hugs the shore and in rapid currents the men pull it along by seizing creepers. During low water, punting poles replace paddles, and sometimes the riders get out and push. High water offers cuts through the forest. I have timed these short cuts against the regular passage downstream and found that there is no actual saving. Threading through jungle lagoons in a large canoe is time-consuming, but is less monotonous and tiring than the direct passage. These passages lead often through dense brush that

5: Goldman E-5 (1939-1940) 1963
SQ19 Tucano SQ19
CUBEO

tears the skin, and where a clumsy move shakes down hordes of stinging ants, or the canoe has to be pushed through narrowly spaced trees. Sometimes the canoe is portaged across a hillock. The forest passage is made with light, quiet strokes in keeping with the silence Indians observe in the forest.

Canoes range in size from a one-man capacity to up to one ton. Each man makes a personal fishing canoe. Some prefer a four-man capacity, but the small one-man canoe is most popular. Every community has at least one large cargo canoe with a capacity ranging from a half to a whole ton. Usually made by the headman, it is for the use of all, for long trips, for transporting cargo such as farinha or palm leaves for roofing, and is the festive canoe that transports women and children to drinking parties. The headman is the owner but the canoe is taken freely by sibmen. Paddles are individually owned and are kept in the house, never in the canoe, but are freely borrowed.

Women do not own canoes, a canoe belonging always to its maker, but women have use of the large canoe. They do little unaccompanied traveling. I have rarely seen a woman alone in a canoe; she is accompanied at least by a child. A woman in a canoe alone is suspected of running away or of a rendezvous with a lover. Women walk great distances, but a man is ashamed to walk if he can go by water. A man who does not own a canoe is regarded as lazy and inept, and some boys who have never learned to make a canoe are scorned by the girls and find it difficult to marry.

Canoes don't last long. Unless properly seasoned, the wood is crached by the sun, and such canoes split quickly. Short splits are calked with pitch, stuffed with a rag, or smeared with clay. I have been in canoes that required constant bailing; but as a rule an old canoe is left at the canoe landing house for the children to play in. Finally it is sunk in shallow water at the canoe landing, where it serves as a receptacle for manioc set to soften. Good canoes are brought into the house and are used as chicha containers during a drinking party. On the Cuduiarí, Koch-Grünberg saw canoes ornamented on the inside with painted designs, as well as paddles with painted motifs on the blades (1909, II, 89). By 1939 such embellishments had disappeared.

The Cubeo are careless in mooring canoes, and they float away but are always recovered. No canoes have ever been reported as stolen. A week may pass before an owner of a lost canoe goes to look for it. He waits until he needs it, for there is never any doubt that he will

5: Goldman E-5 (1939-1940) 1963
SQ19 Tucano SQ19
CUBEO

The opposite shore is close at hand and the entire river can be traversed downstream in two days and upstream in four.

The Vaupés, the main stream, is a mighty river, also swift, rocky, and guarded by cataracts than can be perilously "shot" in high water and portaged at other times. It is a deep river with distant banks, in places resembling a sea.

During the two "dry" seasons, *ihíbo* (October–December, February and March), the Indian communities are perched on high banks, in many places clayey and sources of ceramic clay. Access is difficult; the steep, often slippery slopes are hard to manage unless the people have troubled to provide wooden steps or a handrail. At the height of the June, or great, rains, the flood reaches to the clearing, and the river is brought close. A community with its plantations is then an island, the low-lying country a vast lake.

The Cubeo are more pleased with low water than with high. High water, to be sure, does not threaten cultivations, which are always on high ground, and flooding facilitates river travel, yielding shorter routes over ordinarily sinuous turnings of the river. But the seasons of high water (*ildkoro*) (May–August and January) bring relative scarcity even though bitter manioc is an unfailing crop. Fish and game are then most difficult to catch. At the bottom of low water, fish are scarce but game, drawn to the dwindling streams, is now abundant. The peak seasons, when game and fish are both abundant, are after the beginning of the rains, when the rivers are filling in November, and at the conclusion of the rains in July, when the rivers have begun to fall off. The Cubeo render *ihíbo* as summer and *ildkoro* as winter. They also refer to seasons as *kwaíno* (falling river) and as *eddwaiya* (growing river).

Thus, while the Cubeo normally do not experience famine or, for that matter, serious deprivation at any season, the periods of glut are short, one falling roughly between October and December, and the other a minor dry season between February and April. During these seasons fish need only be scooped out of the drying streams, game – tapir, peccary, deer, capybara, and paca – crowds the river banks, and the manioc yield is at its peak. These are favorable seasons for ceremony – initiation into the ancestral cult, fish dances, deer dances, mourning rites, and the most frequent round of drinking parties.[1] The seasons, however, lack abruptness. The rains increase and then decrease. Neither economic nor ceremonial life need be precisely geared to a season.

While the Cubeo are a true riverine people, knowledgeable about

[1] The year is reckoned from the dry season, since this is the time when manioc gardens are extended or new clearings started.